

6172.61 DISTANCE EDUCATION

Distance Learning Plan (Due to Necessary School Closure)

This policy outlines the Salisbury school district (District) plan to provide distance learning options in the event that the District must be closed for any reason or provide temporary remote learning to students who are opting not to attend classes when school is open. This action plan allows the District to operate remotely or for students to learn remotely when school is in session while continuing to provide meaningful instruction to students through the use of a variety of instructional resources.

The Board of Education (Board) seeks to ensure fluid operation during a time when:

- Classes must be cancelled due to a health emergency, as well as provide equitable access for all students.
- Classes are not cancelled, but students are choosing to learn remotely per allowances provided by the CSDE.

A distance learning day is a remote school day where students and staff have an opportunity to explore and engage in meaningful learning experiences that are: (a) aligned to the curriculum, (b) connected to standards, and (c) relevant to the current instructional sequence. While nothing replaces the genuine human interactions that happen in an authentic classroom between students and teachers, distance learning will support continuity of instruction in the event of a closure or a situation where students are approved to opt into remote access to in-session classrooms.

Distance learning school days will run as detailed in the section below entitled “Scheduling.” The schedule will allow teaching staff adequate time to present the learning experience to support students as they (a) access information, (b) prioritize their day, and (c) communicate with their teacher(s). Teachers will be available during the hours listed below.

Goals of the Distance Learning Program

The Board, by its adoption of this policy, establishes the following goals for the distance learning program:

1. To ensure the continuity of instruction if and when a pandemic negatively impacts the District’s ability to maintain daily operations.

2. To continue to provide students with an authentic, meaningful, and comprehensive school experience.
3. To mitigate or completely eliminate possible exposure to and spread of pandemic influenza among students, parents, guardians, employees, and community members.
4. To ensure compliance with all federal and state statutes and regulations and Board policies and administrative regulations, as may be amended by state and federal authorities.

Synchronous learning experiences are when classes occur on set schedules and time frames. Students and instructors are online simultaneously since lectures, discussions, and presentations take place at specific hours. When blended or remote, all students must be online at that exact time in order to participate in the class.

Asynchronous learning experiences let students complete their work assigned on their own time. Students are given a time frame, usually a one-week window, during which they need to connect to their class daily or as determined by the teacher. When asynchronous, students can access assignments and content at any time of the day (or night).

Temporary Remote Learning - Opportunity for students to voluntarily attend classes remotely while school is in session. These opportunities are allowed only at the discretion of the Commissioner of Education and guidelines for these situations will be in alignment with those provided by the CSDE. These situations will be temporary and the State will define the period of time that this arrangement is permissible.

Key Components of the Distance Learning Program

The Board, by its adoption of this policy, establishes the following key components for the distance learning program:

1. Equitable Access: To provide equitable instruction, the District will ensure that all students have access to instructional materials and electronic devices.

- a. In grades PK-8, the District will provide all students with the following:
 - i. access to a device during the day. Data about access to the Internet and the availability of digital devices for student use at home is to be collected by the District. In the event that a student does not have access to a computer or Wi-Fi at home, the District will provide a device and/or a hotspot for student use. Students will have access to developmentally appropriate learning

management systems and parents/caregivers and students will receive any necessary training to ensure system access and effective use.

ii.a special packet that includes all needed lessons/instructional materials. These materials will supplement instruction according to the needs of each grade level from grades PK-8.

iii. In grades PK-8, information provided on District website(s) and shall be available in a number of language choices.

The Superintendent will send notice of a school closure and change to distance learning to parents/guardians using the District's emergency notification/communication system. Detailed instructions with regard to building access to pick up necessary materials and other important information will be posted on the District's website as well as via social media.

2. Communication

The Superintendent will also send notice of any opportunity for students to choose to engage in remote learning while school is in session per the permission of the CSDE. Detailed instructions about the guidelines for this arrangement will be sent to participants and will be posted on the District's website.

The District will prioritize notification to families of the implications of the choice to temporarily participate in remote learning. The notification should include as much specific information as possible for families making this voluntary choice, including but not limited to:

- limitations that exist under the district's planned remote learning programming (what will not be provided for students and families under this option)
- the expectations for the family to supervise and support student attendance and engagement, as noted below
- that the nature of the voluntary remote learning programming may not result in matching instructional hours 1:1 with an in-person learning model and as such, identification of the anticipated active instructional time
- what model the district will employ, including but not limited to: district-run models that pool students by grade district-wide and assign them to a teacher who needs to work remotely, even for students in different school attendance zones,

cooperative models within a region, programs operated by another public school district or RESC, or use of an online program consistent with the school curriculum

- the temporary nature of the remote learning programming, as described further below
- protocols regarding opting into remote learning and a local procedure to request parents provide notice if the student will return to in-person classes (and establishing the boundaries around opting into voluntary remote learning, such as the requirement the option be exercised as a full day, not selection of some classes in-person and others remote)
- confirmation that this voluntary family choice be clearly differentiated from the circumstance where classes are cancelled for a broader population, should public health data require it.

The District should develop local protocols and procedures setting expectations for families to continue the distance learning programming. Students will be expected to attend school daily the same as an in-person learner and will not have access to an “a la carte” model for attendance. The District may choose to require that, in order for students to participate in school activities not related to the core curriculum (such as extracurricular activities or electives), students must be attending in school in-person and not have opted into remote learning programming.

3. Attendance, Funding and Enrollment

The Board directs the Superintendent or his/her designee to develop a plan to verify and track student attendance as related to the provided distance learning activities. Parents/guardians must report the days their child(ren) are unable to participate in the provided distance learning activities due to illness or other specified reason. A means of reporting absences must be made available to parents/guardians. In addition, when required, the District will treat a student’s attendance record for the year in conformity with any “Attendance Guidance” provided by the Commissioner of Education and the Connecticut State Department of Education.

4. Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying

During distance learning days, the District will adhere to all aspects of our Harassment Intimidation and Bullying policies and procedures.

5. Time Schedules

For distance learning during a school closure, teachers will be available during the posted

hours of school operation in accordance with the Salisbury Central School Faculty Association Contract. The time schedules may be altered to reflect bargaining unit agreements between the Board and staff and any memorandums of understanding entered into as a result of the emergency situation. Specific times will be communicated to parents and posted on the school website.

For distance learning when school is in session, students will be expected to log on to their computers and join classes according to the regular school day schedule. Teachers will provide links to the learning management system to provide students with access to classes each day.

6. School Nutrition Benefits

Student(s) shall be afforded the opportunity to pick up a nutritional school lunch prepared by the food service provider/department. The schedule for availability and locations of pickup shall be posted on the school website and through the District's emergency notification system. All students will follow the meal service guidelines in place for the current school year.

7. Curriculum

Distance Learning During School Closure

Distance learning will support continuity of instruction in the event of a closure, but, activities and assessments may take longer in this mode than they might during a regular, in-person school day. As such, modifications to the curriculum may be required in the event of a sustained closure. Therefore, all curricular areas will have identified priority standards on which they will focus during the period of closure. These priority standards should be determined such that a student who demonstrates proficiency on those standards will be prepared to successfully begin the next course in a sequence requiring minimal remediation. Social-emotional learning activities, embedded in the curriculum, will be a vital part of the distance-learning model implemented by teachers in the District.

Distance Learning While School is in Session

The intent of the District's distance learning program while school is in session would be to make the best efforts to provide learning programs in line with District expectations as students will transition back to in-person classes after this option is no longer available. Therefore, to the extent possible, curriculum and grade progression should be made accessible.

8. Resources to Support Instruction

The District shall use varied resources to support student learning. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

- a. The posting on the school's website of a web page devoted to relevant online resources and digital subscriptions.
- b. Teacher use of a common learning management system and digital tools.

9. Student and Parent Responsibilities

Distance Learning due to School Closure

- a. At the PK-8 Grade level students are expected to log into the learning management system to identify the expected work for the day. Students in grades PK-8 may be asked to collaborate virtually with other classmates on assignments. Students without a school approved excuse will be held responsible for all work not completed by the assigned deadline. Deadlines will be assigned at the discretion of the classroom teacher and assignments will be returned either graded or with feedback in a timely manner.
- b. Students and/or parents/caregivers who have questions about a lesson or assignment will contact the teacher using the school-approved tools to ask for additional guidance.
- c. Students will be present for synchronous learning experiences with their classmates and teacher(s).
- d. Students will apply curriculum-based social-emotional learning strategies in the context of distance learning, connecting with staff and peers for support as needed.
- e. Students will review and respond to teacher-provided feedback (PK-8) as well as monitor grades (5-8) in the student information system (i.e. PowerSchool) on a weekly basis.

Distance Learning While School is in Session

- a. PK-8 grade level students are expected to log into the learning management system to join their scheduled classes. Students in grades 5-8 may be asked to collaborate virtually with other classmates on assignments. Students without a school approved excuse will be held responsible for all work not completed by the assigned deadline. Deadlines will be assigned at the discretion of the classroom teacher and assignments will be returned either graded or with feedback in a timely manner.

- b. Students who have questions about a lesson or assignment will have opportunities to voice them during class. Students and/or parents/caregivers (for younger students) may contact the teacher using the school-approved tools in accordance with guidance from teachers to ask for additional guidance.
- c. Students will apply curriculum-based social-emotional learning strategies in the context of distance learning, connecting with staff and peers for support as needed.
- d. Students in grades 5-8 will review and respond to teacher-provided feedback as well as monitor grades in the student information system (i.e. PowerSchool) on a weekly basis.
- e. Parents of students who decide to opt into voluntary remote learning will be expected to supervise and engage their children to fully and effectively access the remote learning programming that is offered through the District.
- f. While allowing access to the mandatory aspects of public education cannot be restricted, the District will consult with Board counsel regarding proper notification and acknowledgement of families when they opt into temporary remote educational programming. This may mean access to certain classes or activities is not possible from a health and safety and planning perspective.

10. Special Education

Distance Learning Due to School Closure

- a. The District will provide distance learning options to address the provision of appropriate special education and related services for identified students with disabilities. Programs and services shall be provided to students ages three through 21, in concert with the requirements of federal and state law; such requirements which may be amended by governmental action, with modifications that may be unavoidable due to the health crisis. It is recognized that the District may not be able to provide all services in the same manner as they are typically provided.
- b. Students will continue to receive provisions of their IEP requirements and will be provided with a free and appropriate program (FAPE) encompassing special education and related services to the greatest extent possible under the circumstances. What is appropriate and reasonable will include the individual child's circumstances as well as

- the circumstances related to the pandemic/epidemic emergency.
- c. Appropriately certified professional staff members will continue to implement these programs through distance learning opportunities. All special education programming will be consistent with the student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) to the extent appropriate.
 - d. All disabled students with an in-class resource center program documented in the IEP will be provided with modifications to meet their needs based on the distance learning options afforded to their general education counterparts.
 - e. All students with pull out replacement center programs documented in the IEP will be provided with appropriate materials and instruction by their special education teachers to meet their needs based on the distance learning options appropriate to their IEPs and learning abilities.
 - f. All students with self-contained programs documented in the IEP will be provided with appropriate materials and instruction by their special education teachers to meet their needs based on the distance learning options appropriate to their IEPs and learning abilities.
 - g. The Board acknowledges that classroom and one-to-one instructional aides will not be available to support a student during a health-related closure.
 - h. Related Services (Counseling, Speech-Language, Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy): Counseling, Speech, Physical and Occupational Therapy activities will be provided to students by therapist(s) via emailed activities that have been individualized based on IEP goals. Additional activities will be scheduled and provided based on individualized needs.
 - i. Speech language services and counseling services may be delivered to special education students through the use of electronic communication or a virtual or online platform, as appropriate.
 - j. Out of District Programs: In the event that District schools are closed and private out-of-district schools remain open, students who are transported by a private company should attend school unless otherwise indicated by the out-of-district placement. In the event that the student is transported to the out-of-district placement by district transportation and the buses remain non-operational due to the closing, the parents will be asked to drive their child to the school and will be reimbursed for transportation according to Board policy for days the child is in attendance during this

health-related closure.

In the event that District schools are open and private out-of-district schools are closed, the District will collaborate with the out-of-district placement to offer appropriate meaningful learning activities for completion at home.

- k. Referrals and Evaluations: Traditional timelines will be adhered to via the Supervisor of Special Services and meetings will be held remotely. The District will make every effort to ensure that evaluations are completed within the statutory timelines.

Timelines may be impacted due to extended school closures. *(Days that schools are closed are not counted as “school days” for the initial evaluation timeline. The timeline pauses during the school closure.)* Child Study Team members will contact parents if evaluations fall outside of the legally mandated timeframes.

- l. Annual Reviews and Reevaluations: These shall take place once District schools reopen. Parent/Guardians may agree in writing that a reevaluation is not necessary. IEPs that lapse during the school closure shall remain in effect until a new IEP is developed. When school personnel and parents/guardians agree that a PPT meeting is necessary during the time of school closure, it shall be held via alternate means such as video conferencing or conference call.
- m. Due Process Hearings/Activities: The District will comply with and operate within any extension provided by the Commissioner of Education for all state statutory and regulatory time requirements related to special education due process activities.
- n. Communication: The District’s special education staff shall provide information through a variety of methods, including family phone calls, emails, and video conferences. Also, at least one member of a child’s team (special education teacher, speech therapist, psychologist) is to be in contact with the respective parent/guardian at least weekly (unless less frequent contacts have been requested).

Distance Learning While School is in Session

In order for the district to provide a student with a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) and implement the student’s individualized education program (IEP) as designed, special education and related services are typically programmed for in-person access. This method of instructional delivery generally affords the student with the most equitable educational experience in the least restrictive environment (LRE). State and federal laws, and the associated guidance, do not address the provision of special education services via remote learning as a matter of choice.

This constitutes a different circumstance than a state or local public health mandate, individual medical necessity, or a determination made by a planning and placement team (PPT).

The requirements under state law for the provision of homebound and hospitalized instruction for special education students remain unchanged. The District is still required to provide homebound and hospitalized instruction to special education students who are unable to attend school due to a verified medical reason which may include mental health issues.

Homebound and hospitalized instruction, pursuant to state law, should not be confused with instruction in the home, which is an articulated placement on the continuum of educational placements outlined in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Such placement would occur as the result of a PPT recommendation that instruction in the home provides the student with FAPE in the least restrictive environment and would be reflected in the student's IEP.

11. Staff Responsibilities

Distance Learning Due to School Closure

The Board expects the teaching staff to be available through email and online between the posted times, to read and respond to emails during noted hours, and to adhere to all district policies as may be modified due to the nature and length of the pandemic, and to report any instances of students at risk, threats made, or any other meaningful information to District Administrators.

Paraprofessionals will receive instructions from the appropriate Supervisor of Special Services and/or their building Principals. Professional development modules via online programs will be made available in order to provide aides with ongoing educational opportunities.

District administrators will work from home to assist in the daily operation of all aspects of distance learning. In the event that the District is placed under general quarantine, administrative responsibilities will be determined by the Superintendent of Schools. Virtual planning meetings may be necessary.

Distance Learning While School is in Session

Teachers will not be expected to prepare a separate set of lesson plans for students who opt in to distance learning while school is in session. Students will log-in to the classroom setting and receive the same instruction as their in-person peers. They will have the opportunity during class time to ask questions or consult with the teacher.

Access to teachers outside of the classroom will be the same as for their in-person peers. Students may contact the teacher using the school-approved tools in accordance with guidance from teachers to ask for additional assistance.

12. Monitoring Student Engagement

The Board considers student engagement essential. To ensure that all students are engaged and are connected to the resources they need, District and school administrators shall have regular connections with students and families. District and school staff shall check-in and confirm whether families have access to information and services, are safe and supported, and are prepared to support their child(ren)'s learning through the District's continued learning efforts.

In order to monitor student engagement in continued learning, the Board expects the following actions to take place:

- a. Teachers and support staff are to connect with all students to maintain their relationships, assist with issues related to assignments, and encourage full participation in the continued learning opportunities. Connections should be documented and tracked as appropriate.
- b. Student support staff shall identify students who were chronically absent prior to the school closure/cancellation of classes or otherwise identified as needing additional support to determine if such supports can continue virtually. The option to refer a student exhibiting inadequate engagement to the District's team responsible for school attendance should be considered as necessary.
- c. School administrators and support staff are to reach out to students who are not signing into online learning or engaging in other continued learning opportunities. Families are to be contacted by school staff to ensure safety and well-being and connect students to the continued learning opportunities and technology they may require.

13. Student Feedback and Grades

The principal shall inform the Board of Education and discuss with them the feedback and grading and reporting systems as developed by the administration and teaching staff and upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools.

(cf. 0523 – Equity and Diversity)

(cf. 3520.13 – Student Data Protection & Privacy/Cloud-Based Issues)

(cf. 5131.81 – Use of Electronic Devices)

(cf. 5131.911 – Bullying)

(cf. 5131.913 – Cyberbullying)

(cf. 5141.4 – Reporting of Child Abuse and Neglect)
(cf. 6114.8 – Pandemic/Epidemic Emergencies)
(cf. 6114.81 – Emergency Suspension of Policy During Pandemic)
(cf. 6141.321 – Acceptable Computer Use)
(cf. 6141.323 – Filtering Access to Electronic Networks)
(cf. 6141.324 – Posting of Student Work/Photographs)
(cf. 6141.327 –Electronic Resources)
(cf. 6141.3291 – One-to-One Tablet Program)
(cf. 6141.326 – Online Social Networking)
(cf. 6141.328 – Bring Your Own Device)
(cf. 6141.329 – Electronic Reading (e-reader) Devices)
(cf. 6146.1 – Assessment Systems)
(cf. 6156.2 – Off-Site Computer Use)
(cf. 6172.6 – Virtual/Online Course; Distance Education)

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes

10-221 Boards of education to prescribe rules.

18 U.S.C. §§2510-2522, Electronic Communication Privacy Act.

P.L. No. 110-385, Protecting Children in the 21st Century Act.

Policy Adopted by the Salisbury Board of Education: January 25, 2021